

Castle and Bipartisan Group of Colleagues Introduce Resolution to Bolster Preventive Health Care in America -- July 31, 2008

Members Cite New
Evidence on Toll of Disease and Effectiveness of
Prevention

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Reps. Michael N. Castle (DE) and Diana DeGette (CO-1) of the Diabetes Caucus, Reps. Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-34), James McGovern (MA-3), and Kay Granger (TX-12) of the Study Group on Public Health along with Rep. Jim Moran (VA-8) from the Prevention Caucus, all co-chairs of their respective groups, introduced a resolution expressing support for an increased federal commitment to prevention and public health for all Americans. Their resolution was introduced amidst growing evidence that chronic disease is crippling America's economy and strengthening prevention is the most effective, efficient way to reduce the impact of illnesses like obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and heart disease on America's businesses and families. Chronic diseases currently account for seven out of every ten deaths in the U.S. and 75 percent of health care spending.

"Promoting healthy lifestyles will reduce the impact of devastating chronic diseases like obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and heart disease, and it will save lives" said Rep. Castle. "If we prioritize prevention, we can improve individuals' health while lowering U.S. health care costs."

"We spend more than any other nation on health care, yet experts tell us that today's children may be the first generation in American history to have shorter, less healthy lives than their parents," said Rep. Roybal-Allard. "One reason for this failure is that our health system continues to prioritize medical care based on disease treatment, rather than preventing diseases before they become more costly and difficult to treat."

"I'm pleased to join my colleagues in introducing this resolution," said Rep. McGovern.

"In tackling the health care crisis in this country, we certainly need to work harder. But we also need to work smarter. Prevention and education are critical to long-term public health in America. That kind of investment isn't just the right thing to do; it also makes good fiscal sense."

"Our country will never contain health care costs until we place a higher priority on public health and prevention programs," said Rep. Granger. "An investment of just \$10 per person per year in proven community-based programs could save this country more than \$16 billion annually within five years."

"Preventive care is the most effective way to reduce exploding health care costs in the U.S.," said Rep. Moran. "Study after study shows that, by catching disease early, by taking steps necessary to promote health and wellness, chronic, more expensive to treat diseases and conditions can be avoided."

"America could save billions of dollars by reducing the need for expensive medical care," said Congresswoman DeGette, Vice Chair of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. "We don't have a health care system in this country; we have a sick care system. Less than four cents of every American health care dollar is currently spent on prevention, the balance is spent on medical care. As policymakers we can start by looking at simple ways to improve individuals' health as well as how we fund health care in this country. Congress should invest in prevention to both improve health outcomes and save money in the long term."

"We are experiencing an epidemic of costly disease in America, where the response from policy makers has often been more sluggish than responsive," said Jeff Levi, Executive Director of Trust for America's Health, a leading public health

non-profit. "I want to commend Reps. Roybal-Allard, McGovern, Granger, Moran, DeGette, and Castle on taking decisive action to help solve one of the greatest health challenges our nation has ever faced."

The resolution emphasizes the toll U.S. health care costs take on the economy.

Americans spend more than \$2.2 trillion on health care annually, which is nearly three times more than in 1990 and over eight times more than in 1980. A recent report by the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease noted that the indirect health care costs of chronic disease, such as absenteeism, cost our economy \$1 trillion each year. Yet, less than 4 cents of every health care dollar is spent on prevention and public health.

The resolution asserts that the best way to control these costs and give all Americans the opportunity to lead healthier lives is to invest in common-sense preventive measures, such as increasing physical activity, promoting better nutrition, and adults taking one aspirin a day.

In advocating these solutions, the members cite recommendations from two recent studies on the impact of chronic disease. A new report by Trust for America's Health entitled Prevention for a Healthier America finds that a small strategic investment in disease prevention could result in significant savings in U.S. health care costs. An investment of \$10 per person per year in proven community-based programs to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent smoking and other tobacco use could save the country more than \$16 billion annually within five years. That is a return of \$5.60 for every \$1.

A report by the Partnership for Prevention found that increasing participation to 90 percent of just five key preventive measures would save more than 100,000 lives each year. These methods include boosting the

portion of adults who take an aspirin every day, and the number of smokers who are advised by a health professional to quit with an offer of medication or other assistance. Improving the portion of adults age 50 and older who are up to date with colorectal cancer screening and annual flu immunizations; as well as bolstering the number of women age 40 and older who have been screened for breast cancer in the past 2 years, would also save thousands of lives.

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